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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000488

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DEPT FOR AF DAS WOODS; AF/S BRUCE NEULING
NSC PLS PASS TO SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR C. COURVILLE
DEPARTMENT PASS EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/31/2015

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [MDC](#)

SUBJECT: MDC HEAD PREDICTS VICTORY AND ASKS SUPPORT

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPHER W. DELL, REASON 1.4 b/d

Summary

1. (C) In a midnight meeting with the Ambassador on March 30, MDC leader Morgan Tsvagirai predicted that his party would win a majority of the contested seats in the next day,s parliamentary elections. He said he would hold a press conference on Friday afternoon, April 1, to claim a democratic mandate and asked for a strong statement of support from the United States. The Ambassador responded that if the MDC won a clear majority of the contested seats, we would support his claim to a democratic mandate. He added that in our view, President Mugabe would have to be held responsible for any post-election violence that resulted from GOZ electoral fraud. End Summary.

MDC Will Win Big

2. (C) Tsvangirai said he had just returned from a final campaign swing. He was tired but elated by the enthusiastic crowds he and his party had drawn in the campaign,s final weeks. The momentum was with his party and ZANU-PF knew it and was gearing itself for defeat. ZANU-PF was saddled with bad candidates and a bad campaign and their support was noticeably flagging. Nathan Shamuyarira, Politburo member and ZANU-PF Secretary for Information and Publicity had publicly acknowledged that his party might win only 57 seats. Tsvangirai said that result would already leave the MDC with a majority of the contested seats, but he thought they could do even better.

3. (C) Tsvangirai said that in that event he would claim a democratic mandate. His party would have won a majority of the contested seats and in any democratic country that should give it the right to form the next government. He would hold a press conference on Friday, probably around noon, when he was fairly sure of the final tally, to call upon President Mugabe to recognize the MDC victory and to begin negotiations on transition arrangements.

4. (C) Tsvangirai said Mugabe would doubtless argue that he was elected through 2008 and he would rely on the 30 appointed seats to maintain ZANU-PF control of Parliament. Tsvangirai said MDC had no preconceived agenda for

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negotiations. However, it would not join a government of national unity and would argue that 30 appointed seats should be ignored. He acknowledged that a key moment could come when the new Parliament was seated some two weeks after the election. The Ambassador asked what role Tsvangirai foresaw for South African President Mbeki, to which Tsvangirai replied little or none given his open support for Mugabe and ZANU-PF.

Appeals for U.S Support

5. (C) Tsvangirai asked that the U.S. come out strongly in support of his claim of a democratic mandate. The Ambassador responded that in the event the MDC won a clear majority of the contested seats he could count on our support. The Ambassador said he would also hold a press conference on Friday, at 11:00. His purpose was to be among the first to publicly comment on the election) drawing on the Embassy,s extensive observation efforts) and thereby frame the subsequent debate. He asked to speak with Tsvangirai in advance to coordinate messages. He added that the U.S. would likely issue an official statement at the noon State Department press briefing in Washington that day. We hoped

at both his press conference and in the statement to say that despite the obstacles the GOZ had placed in their way, the Zimbabwean people had spoken and the voice had to be heard and respected by the nation's leaders.

16. (S) The Ambassador asked what the MDC would do in the event fraud prevented an MDC victory. Tsvangirai said he did not expect such a result and hoped to avoid any violence but that contingency plans were being made. The Ambassador stressed that the U.S. would not encourage a Ukraine-like campaign of civil disobedience, but that if one gathered momentum of its own accord we would look to Washington for guidance on ways to be supportive. He added that in our view, the responsibility lay with Mugabe to avoid violence by ensuring that the will of the Zimbabwean people was accurately reflected in the election's results and that he not destabilize the country by setting off a wave of angry protests in response to election fraud.

Comment

17. (C) Win, lose, or draw, Tsvangirai has raised his stature within Zimbabwe and within the region over the past month as he has personally led a resurgent and better organized MDC to the cusp of a historic electoral outcome. More than ever, he appears to have what it takes to lead this country in a democratic direction. However, no one, least of all Tsvangirai, is under any illusions about the long, difficult

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road ahead. Robert Mugabe hasn't survived as president of this country for twenty-five years without an abundance of nerve and guile. Regardless of the outcome of this election, our task remains to find ways to support Tsvangirai, the MDC, and other democrats in their crusade to free this country.

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